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ABSTRACT

Increasing school violence and vandalism, in Philadelphia and nationwide, require discussion of the likely causes and of new solutions. Crime in schools is extensive, according to the national Safe School Study. Philadelphia data show that school crime there increased from 1975 to 1980 in seven out of ten categories. The authors of the Safe School Study and other experts cite over 20 factors related to school crime, including school governance and leadership, interpersonal communication in schools, family characteristics, and local crime conditions. Strategies suggested nationally to handle school crime involve both short-term measures, such as student identification systems, and long-range changes in such aspects of education as disciplinary systems, student participation in school decisions, and student-teacher contact outside school. A Philadelphia School District committee adds further strategies, oriented toward better training for teachers and police and toward greater community involvement. To handle school crime effectively, however, a comprehensive new synthesis of the various strategies developed is needed. The solution offered here combines 15 recommendations, including suggestions for early identification and handling of potential disruptors, alternative educational programs, and improved disciplinary records. (RW)

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SCHOOL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM:

AN URBAN DISTRICT'S PERSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION

The risk of violence to teenagers is greater in school than elsewhere, according to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration's (LEAA) National Crime Survey. Teenage youth spend about 25% of their waking hours in school, yet 40% of the robberies and 36% of the assaults upon teenagers occur in school.

"The Safe School Study Report to Congress" (January, 1978) concluded, among other things, that the pattern of violence and vandalism in the schools, which had begun to level off in the early 1970's, would continue to do so into the decade of the '80's. Unfortunately, this expectation has not been realized in Philadelphia, where violence and vandalism continue to permeate the schools.

The Safe School Study has dichotomized school-related disruption as: (1) offenses against persons, and (2) offenses against property. (Offenses against persons include personal theft, attacks, and robbery. Offenses against property include fires, false alarms, bomb threats, vandalism, and burglary). Furthermore, drug and alcohol abuse has led to the development of a third category - "victimless offenses."

The Safe School Study data indicate that each month, more than one out of every ten secondary school students (2.4 million or 11%) have something stolen from them. Well over a quarter of a million students (282,000 or 1.3%) report being attacked each month, though relatively small numbers suffer injury serious enough to require medical attention.

It is certainly no safer being a teacher. About 130,000 (12%) secondary school teachers have property stolen while at work (school) each month. An average of 5,200 teachers are physically attacked, of whom almost 20% (1,000) are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment. During a given year, some 6,000 secondary school teachers have something taken from them by force, weapons, or threats. (Not necessarily by school students, however. Outsiders operating in a school building is a typical urban problem).

The risks of offenses against persons are greater in junior high schools and large communities, while the risks of offenses against property are generally about equal in both junior and senior high schools throughout metropolitan areas. However, the Safe Schools Study notes as important, that "school crime and disruption are not specifically urban phenomena." As with crime in general, the greatest percentage of increase may be in areas not typically considered trouble spots. Schools located in high crime neighborhoods do have more violence and disruption than schools located in neighborhoods with lower crime rates, though the Safe Schools Study data also indicate that schools in high crime areas still tend to be safer than their immediate environs.

The focus of this paper is to describe in some detail the situation with respect to the violence and discipline in a large urban school district; in this case, the School District of Philadelphia. The city itself will be viewed as a backdrop for examining the situation in the public schools. An examination of a number of those

factors related to the prevalence of violence in schools will be examined, along with strategies presently being tested, as a means of dealing with those factors. Finally, a set of specific recommendations will be developed based upon the previous successes and failures, as well as promising practices in other cities and programmatic breakthroughs elsewhere.

II. PHILADELPHIA—THE CITY

According to Michael Berger (Violence in the Schools: Causes and Remedies, 1974), it is virtually impossible to determine to what degree violence stems from the child, the home, the community, the school, or a combination of the four.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics indicate incidents of major crime increased by 13% in Philadelphia during 1979 (see Appendix, Figure 1). Philadelphia's percentage increase was the highest of any of the U.S.'s ten largest cities (see Appendix, Figure 2). This jump also represented Philadelphia's sharpest rise in major crime since 1974, according to Citizens Crime Commission of Philadelphia statistics.

Among the five largest cities, Philadelphia's 13% rise in crime in 1979 topped Los Angeles' reported 11% increase and New York's 9% increase. Chicago, I am happy to relate, reported a 2% decline, and Detroit had the same level of major crime as it had in 1978. Major crime increased by 8% throughout the United States in 1979, according to the FBI, compared with a rise of only 2% in 1978 and a decrease of 3% during 1977.

III. THE CITY'S SCHOOLS

"It cannot be denied that urban society tends to be a violent one, and that aspects of it overflow into the school. Attitudes and behaviors developed in the home and on the street are not left at the schoolhouse door," states Michael Berger.

The public schools of Philadelphia bear mute testimony to that conclusion. A five year serious incident summary shows a steady increase in 7 of 10 categories (see Appendix, Figure 5). The upsurge in incidents of violence in Philadelphia's secondary schools should not be occurring according to the Safe Schools Study. Yet, a comparison of the number of individuals involved in reported assaults on persons (see Appendix, Figure 3) during November, December and January of the 1978-79 and 1979-80 school years and on property (see Appendix, Figure 4) for the same two periods dramatically illustrates the seriousness of the problem.

For example, even though the pupil population has been decreasing, the number of teacher assaults and student assaults has risen, in some cases dramatically. The number of instances of fires set has also risen alarmingly. Student robbery and weapons possession offenses are also on the upswing. The decline in the number of marijuana possession incidents may be due, in part, to the fact that in many cases, authorities are too busy with other more active offenses to deal with nonviolent crimes. Forcible entry rates are down as well, due largely to the fact of new, more sophisticated detection devices

and alarm systems having been installed in many of the facilities throughout the school system.

A complete month-by-month tally of assault-related data for the 1979-80 school year may be found in Figures 6 and 7 in the Appendix.

Though assaults on property continues to increase, the percentage change has not been nearly as great as the assaults on persons. School District officials attribute this fact to the use of a 36-man mobile plant facility security unity, the installation of intrusion alarms in 221 schools, and the impact of 32 night watchmen to guard property during after school hours and on weekends and holidays.

A study of student discipline released recently by the American Association of School Administrators noted that student behavior problems may, in part, be caused by teachers. Among the factors related to classroom disruption are poor teaching, abrasive personality, ignorance of child development, violations of common sense and of human relations.

Of particular interest is the sharp rise in the number of assaults on pupils by school personnel, which more than doubled, and the number of assaults on school personnel by pupils, which increased by more than 35% (see Appendix, Figure 8). The traditional "pupil on pupil" assault problem, while still serious, no longer holds center stage. The greatest threat now seems to be assaults by trespassers on students and school personnel.

IV. FACTORS RELATED TO VIOLENCE

In recent years an enormous amount has been written concerning the antecedents of our violent society and the reflection of that society by its school students. Many a day long symposia might be conducted to deal with that topic alone. No attempt will be made here to review the literature on factors related to violence. Instead, a brief and simple synthesis will be provided as an introduction to the strategies suggested in the next two sections.

If one were able to cast aside those factors over which the schools have no control, Berger claims that three areas in which schools do contribute to the problem of crime and violence would emerge: (1) governance, (2) interpersonal communications, and (3) leadership.

Instead of being based on a rational structure of positive and negative incentives, schools tend toward arbitrary and inflexible rules and punishments, denial of civil rights, and punishment based on administrative or teacher fiat, rather than on evidence.

> Powerless student governments, teacher and/or administrative censorship of many extracurricular activities, lack of student representation on committees relating to discipline, dress codes, curriculum, and rules and regulations promulgated and enforced by a middle class bias, reinforce the image held by students of schools as "repressive."

The deterioration of interpersonal communications between the school and its clients (the students), is due to such diverse factors as unmanageable size, increased numbers of non-English speaking students, decreasing student-teacher and administrator-student contact, diversity of staff-student life styles, and simple failure to explain the reasoning behind certain school rules and regulations.

Some claim that the administrator no longer leads, due to eroding and ill-defined authority. Problems associated with this lack of leadership include increasingly complicated disciplinary requirements, increasing demands for student rights, failure of schools to formulate specific goals and expectations, the waning influence of family and church, and finally, the lack of viable role models.

The Safe School Study identified 10 factors consistently associated with school violence and 12 associated with property loss. Those factors associated with violence are:

- The crime rate, as well as the rate of gang-related activities in the school's attendance area.
- The proportion of students who are male.
- The grade level configuration in secondary schools and the age of the students in attendance.
- The size of the school.
- The principal's firmness in enforcing rules and the amount of control in the classroom.
- Fairness in the enforcement of school rules.

- The size of classes and the number of different students taught by a teacher each week.
- The relevance of the academic courses offered.
- The importance of grades to students
- Students' feelings of lack of control over their lives.

The factors associated with property loss are:

- The crime rate in the school's attendance area.
- The level of residential concentration around the school.
- The presence of non-student youth around the school.
- Family structure and family discipline.
- The school's size.
- Rule enforcement, classroom control, and nonclassroom supervision of students.
- The type and level of coordination between faculty and administration.
- Hostile and authoritarian attitudes on the part of teachers toward students.
- Whether students value their teachers' opinions of them.
- Teachers' manipulation of grades as a disciplinary measure.
- The importance of grades to students.
- The importance of leadership status to students.

V. STRATEGIES

As with factors related to violence, there are certainly an abundant number of proposed strategies for dealing with the causes and

manifestations of the problem. No attempt will be made here to review all of them. Instead, some general comments concerning the approach taken to dealing with violence and vandalism will be included, along with an indication of the School District of Philadelphia's initial approach to this problem.

It has been suggested that schools may move to stem the tide of violence and vandalism by both taking immediate action and developing long range solutions. Among the immediate, are the use of security guards, electronic alarm systems, trespass laws, identification cards, alternative placement centers, suspensions, and expulsions. Most of these remedies are reactive, however. Among the suggested long range solutions, a greater preventative emphasis is evident:

- wider involvement of students in the decision making process
- more humanistic learning environment (mini schools, alternative schools, house plans)
- increase in teacher-student contact outside of the classroom
- end of repressive discipline procedures, particularly the use of corporal punishment
- greater organizational cafeteria line approach to schooling (via work-study programs, modular scheduling), including heavy reliance upon alternative student experiences

- use of community mental health agencies to identify high risk early signs of delinquency and related behavioral difficulties

In Philadelphia, a publication was developed to provide a uniform code of rules and expectations, while simultaneously allowing maximum flexibility in administering the system's discipline code. The goal of the document was to:

- retain and re-emphasize sound principles of good teaching and control
- place all disciplinary policies and guidelines in one convenient reference source
- provide a document containing suggestions for dealing with all types of disruptive behavior confronting the total staff in our schools today
- suggest strategies for dealing with the overall problem of discipline in our schools with respect to the changing parameters in which staff must function
- re-emphasize the need for shared commitment and responsibility by all who have a role to play in education in our schools

But documents are insufficient. They must be operationalized. For example, among the strategies developed by Philadelphia participants in a recent workshop on "Coping with Vandalism, Violence and Disruption," are:

- youth participation and youth development models
- in-school alternatives to suspension
- tutoring programs for students with multiple disciplinary referrals and low achievement
- student, administration, and faculty participation in developing a workable discipline code
- student based drug abuse committee
- network of youth services in the school district
- in-service workshops for teachers on discipline and special needs of students
- school programs that invite community involvement and participation
- in-service workshops for police officers at the Police Academy, including topics of police/school liaisons

Though a step in the right direction, such strategies still fall short of the mark.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to begin to deal with the strategies that are listed in the previous section, new ground must be broken and new configurations of approaches tested. What has been missing seems to be an attempt to sythesize the various strategies developed. The following fifteen recommendations represent a sytheses of Philadelphia's strategies, as well as those prevalent in other

cities and in the literature, and are meant to serve as a response which school systems may well find appropriate to the problems created by student violence:

(1) Attempt to identify potentially disruptive students as early as possible. The work of Marvin Wolfgang, the work reported by George Spivak and his colleagues at Hahnemann Medical College and the information in the Restak Study, all point to the importance of early identification.

(2) Develop linkages to early childhood training programs, parents' training programs and special programs of early school intervention.

(3) Examine the possibility of using behavior modification techniques with pupils who tend to be disruptive.

(4) Make use of peer counseling as early as possible. Most of the work done in peer counseling appears to be at the junior and senior high school level. However, the impact of peer pressure at the early elementary grades should not be overlooked.

(5) Several locations around the country have reported remarkable success with a program for junior and senior high school students based upon penal institution visitations. The opportunity to observe incarceration firsthand and to discuss with prisoners, their lives, purportedly has the impact of shock therapy.

(6) Emphasize parental responsibility and require parental involvement.

(7) Provide training in the area of crises-management for administrators.

(8) Rethink the feasibility of expulsion for certain students. In many states it is virtually impossible to expel a student from school. State associations of school boards, parents' groups, activist groups, and the judiciary should all examine the state regulations with respect to expulsion. Though the overuse of expulsion is an inherent danger, its absolute denial as a remedy may be just as severe a problem.

(9) Revise school districts' disciplinary transfer policies. In many cases, the first line of school district defense against disciplinary problem students is to transfer them to another school within the district. This is effective in certain instances. However, it is inappropriate across the board. Perhaps principals should be most heavily involved in redesigning the disciplinary transfer policy.

(10) Revitalize or develop initially, school district alternative schools and alternative educational experiences for all youth; instructional alternatives, not just disciplinary alternatives, are critical here.

(11) Examine the regulations pertaining to the discipline of special education students. In many cases, teachers' and administrators' hands are tied in dealing with the disciplinary problems associated with special education students. It has been suggested in many circles that special education students be subjected to parallel disciplinary sanctions.

(12) Re-examine the suspension procedures within the school districts. In many cases, suspension procedures are made overly cumbersome by existing due process regulations. It is possible in some instances, to discuss such regulations with the local courts, the Bar Association and the local Civil Liberties group.

(13) Develop a system of secure student records. Maintain those records adequately and develop a means of monitoring individuals, as well as the school system as a whole. Of course, appropriate safeguards must be taken so that individual student rights are not abrogated. It is unfair, however, to the majority of nondisruptive students to provide the habitually disruptive student with a blank slate after every offense.

(14) Develop an early warning system for schools and for students. This ties in with the system of developing and maintaining student records. Such a system might zero in on abberent behavior displayed by certain students, or at the aggregate school level, might alert a principal or a superintendent to the fact that instances of violence and vandalism are rising rapidly at a particular facility.

(15) Work with local and state governments and judiciary authorities to develop a firm set of legal parameters on school-related offenses. With non-school outsiders responsible for an ever increasing share of violence and vandalism in schools, it is essential that the law dealing with such offenders have teeth.

VII. IN CONCLUSION

Some of the recommended responses contained in the preceding section have been tested in Philadelphia; others have not. A few have actually been operationalized.

We certainly do not have all of the answers, but neither are we without a starting point. Viable strategies do exist. What is now needed is planning and consistency in implementation of these strategies. Violence and vandalism may be signs of the times, but such behavior is still unacceptable no matter how prevalent it may become.

APPENDIX

FIGURE 1

Number of Crimes Committed in Philadelphia
1974-1979, by Type

	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974
Murder	385	352	323	338	434	444
Rape	838	724	771	764	716	796
Robbery	8,838	7,069	6,999	7,786	10,405	10,069
Aggravated Assault	4,476	4,224	3,954	4,225	4,776	5,237
Burglary	20,965	19,154	19,108	20,048	22,480	21,295
Larceny	33,863	29,690	28,301	30,242	29,656	27,061
Auto Theft	13,221	11,736	12,371	13,608	15,728	16,804
TOTAL	82,586	72,949	71,827	77,011	84,195	81,706
% increase or decrease	+13%	+2%	-7%	-9%	+3%	+13%

FIGURE 2

Number of Crimes Committed in the Ten Largest Cities in th United States
1978-1979

	1979	1978	Percent + or -
New York	621,110	570,354	+9
Chicago	186,728	190,815	-2
Los Angeles	258,632	233,344	+11
Philadelphia	82,586	72,949	+13
Houston	141,748	132,000	+7
Detroit	110,723	110,511	-
Dallas	93,761	86,569	+8
Baltimore	73,744	69,463	+6
San Diego	72,093	66,838	+8
San Antonio	54,981	52,526	+5
	U.S. Cities over 1 million		+7
	TOTAL U.S.		+8
	Northeast U.S.		+9

FIGURE 3

Number of Individuals Involved in Assaults
School District of Philadelphia

	Pupil by Pupil	Pupil by School Personnel	Pupil by Unidentified Individuals	Pupil by Trespasser	Self-Inflicted Injury	Sub-Total	School Personnel by Pupil	School Personnel by School Personnel	School Personnel by Unidentified Individuals	School Personnel by Trespasser	School Personnel by Parent	Sub-Total	Grand Total
November, December and January 1979-1980 School Year	130	96	70	23	10	329	285	10	35	22	8	360	689
November, December and January 1978-1979 School Year	131	28	8	20	3	190	202	8	19	19	9	257	447

FIGURE 4

Number of Assaults on Property, 1979-1980
School District of Philadelphia

	1979	1980
Burglaries (Forcible Entry)	195	137
Larcenies	679	713
Bomb Threats	61	38
Fires	476	366
Trespassing	304	339

FIGURE 5

Number of Serious Incidents, By Type, 1975-1979

School District of Philadelphia

TYPE OF INCIDENT	Year 1975	Year 1976	Year 1977	Year 1978	Year 1979
Teacher Assaults	326	488	413	396	424
Student Assaults	334	359	317	344	434
Marijuana Possession	168	224	257	311	261
Fires	X	399	574	617	655
Forcible Entry	496	248	536	357	277
Teacher Robbery	50	20	12	13	36
Student Robbery	68	75	31	60	98
Rape	X	10	1	12	7
Trespassing	254	312	289	386	489
Weapons Possession	99	95	84	107	172

FIGURE 6

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN ASSAULTS, BY MONTHS OF THE YEAR

School District of Philadelphia

SCHOOL YEAR 1979 - 1980	Pupil by Pupil	Pupil by School Personnel	Pupil by Unidentified Individuals	Pupil by Trespasser	Self-Inflicted Injury	Sub-Total	School Personnel by Pupil	School Personnel by School Personnel	School Personnel by Unidentified Individuals	School Personnel by Trespasser	School Personnel by Parent	Sub-Total	Total
September	2	4	13	2	0	21	37	0	19	5	2	63	84
October	6	4	0	0	3	13	62	0	10	2	3	77	90
November	31	25	30	0	4	90	107	4	11	6	2	130	220
December	39	16	23	15	2	95	71	4	4	4	0	83	178
January	60	55	17	8	4	144	107	2	20	12	6	147	291
February	6	21	17	15	2	61	110	4	15	0	2	131	192
March	24	12	8	15	4	63	80	4	10	2	5	101	164
April	30	6	37	4	1	78	72	0	2	10	4	88	166
May	40	18	63	11	2	134	45	2	13	2	2	64	198
June	18	2	49	2	3	74	37	2	10	4	2	55	129
Grand Total	256	163	257	72	25	773	728	22	114	47	28	939	1712

FIGURE 7

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN ASSAULTS, BY MONTHS OF THE YEAR

School District of Philadelphia

SCHOOL YEAR 1979 - 1980	Pupil by Pupil	Pupil by School Personnel	Pupil by Unidentified Individuals	Pupil by Trespasser	Self-Inflicted Injury	Sub-Total	School Personnel by Pupil	School Personnel by School Personnel	School Personnel by Unidentified Individuals	School Personnel by Trespasser	School Personnel by Parent	Sub-Total	Total
September	23	3	4	0	3	33	16	0	11	3	0	30	63
October	59	10	10	4	1	84	60	0	4	0	7	71	155
November	31	3	6	1	3	44	60	6	5	4	5	80	124
December	34	9	0	14	0	57	81	2	6	5	2	96	153
January	66	16	2	5	0	89	61	0	8	10	2	81	170
February	16	2	4	0	0	22	42	0	6	0	3	51	73
March	38	4	14	3	2	61	63	4	7	11	3	88	149
April	21	11	5	1	0	38	43	4	6	2	2	57	95
May	19	6	8	7	3	43	67	0	5	5	8	85	128
June	22	11	2	0	1	36	34	0	7	0	5	46	82
Grand Total	329	75	55	35	13	507	527	16	65	40	37	685	1192

FIGURE 8

Comparison of the Number of Individuals Involved in Reported Assaults for the School Years 1978 - 1979 and 1979 - 1980

School District of Philadelphia

Assault Category	School Year	Total - All School Levels	Sr. H.S/ Voc./Tech.	Jr. H.S. Middle S.	Elementary Spec. Cls. Cntr.
Total Report	1979-80	1712	435	637	640
	1978-79	1192	329	392	471
	Change	+ 520	+ 106	+ 245	+ 169
Pupils on Pupils	1979-80	256	75	79	102
	1978-79	329	123	79	127
	Change	- 73	- 48	0	- 25
Trespassrs Unidentified Individuals on Pupils	1979-80	329	103	76	150
	1978-79	90	21	31	58
	Change	+ 239	+ 82	+ 45	+ 112
School Persl. on Pupils	1979-80	163	18	95	50
	1978-79	75	6	27	42
	Change	+ 88	+ 12	+ 68	+ 8
School Persl. on School Persl.	1979-80	22	12	2	8
	1978-79	16	6	2	8
	Change	+ 6	+ 6	0	0
Trespssrs. Unidentfd Indvdls on School Persl.	1979-80	161	52	53	56
	1978-79	105	33	33	39
	Change	+ 56	+ 19	+ 20	+ 17
Pupils on School Persl.	1979-80	728	171	317	240
	1978-79	527	134	208	185
	Change	+ 201	+ 37	+ 109	+ 55
Parents, etc. on School Persl.	1979-80	28	2	8	18
	1978-79	37	3	6	28
	Change	- 9	- 1	+ 2	- 10
Self Inflicted Injuries by Pupils	1979-80	25	2	7	16
	1978-79	13	3	6	4
	Change	+ 12	- 1	+ 1	+ 12